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# EMI Reduction from Airflow Aperture Arrays Using Dual-Perforated Screens and Loss

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**Abstract**—Airflow perforations in shielding enclosures can act as apertures facilitating the coupling from internal sources to external electromagnetic interference (EMI). This EMI radiation for single- and dual-screen configurations was studied herein experimentally and with finite-difference time-domain (FDTD) modeling. A general EMI reduction of more than 20 dB was achieved for dual-perforated screens spaced 1 cm apart when compared to EMI for a single perforated screen. However, in the dual-screen case, the space between the screens can act as a thin cavity, which, in turn, can lead to significant radiation at distinct angles. Damping the resonances by loading the space between the screens with lossy material mitigates this problem and achieves more than 20-dB reduction over a single screen.

**Index Terms**—Aperture, FDTD, shielding enclosure.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE integrity of shielding enclosures is compromised by slots, seams, and apertures for heat dissipation. Radiation from unintended slots and apertures can usually be minimized with gasketing, however, it is more difficult to mitigate the radiation from intended apertures such as those designed for heat dissipation and airflow. Enclosures for high-speed digital designs use aperture arrays or perforated screens instead of large apertures for airflow and heat dissipation to minimize electromagnetic interference (EMI), while allowing for adequate air flow. Due to the total open area required for heat dissipation, as well as structural and manufacturing reasons, there is a lower bound on the minimum size of the apertures of the perforated screen. Considerable work has been done in the study of EMI coupling from perforated aperture arrays [1]–[6]. The radiation from a perforated screen with a large number of apertures and reasonable aperture size may result in EMI problems at high frequencies, i.e., above the fundamental cavity resonance, even though the aperture size might be electrically small. One approach to minimize this risk is to utilize a honeycomb configuration instead of a perforated screen. The honeycomb configuration works well but adds considerable cost to the design over a perforated screen. A dual-perforated screen was tested here as a means of further reducing EMI over a single perforated screen.

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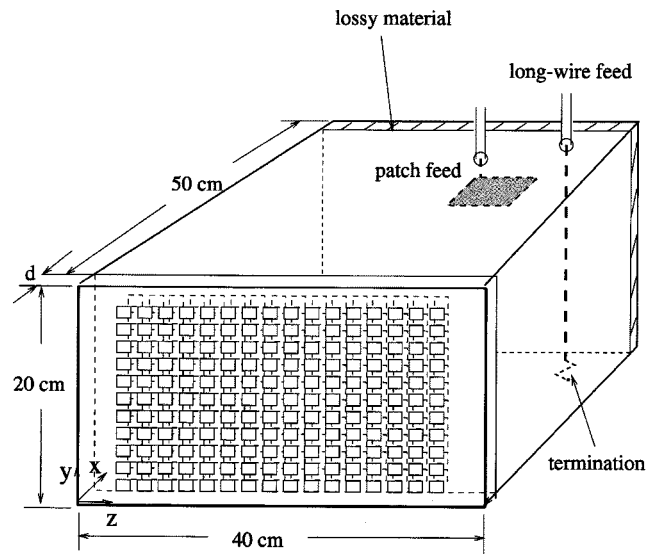


Fig. 1. The geometry of the test enclosure with dual-perforated screens.

The finite-difference time-domain (FDTD) method has been widely applied in solving many types of electromagnetic problems. It possesses the advantages of simple implementation for relatively complex problems and high accuracy. A rectangular test enclosure with faces accommodating perforated screens was investigated experimentally and with FDTD modeling. The measurements and modeling results for dual-perforated screens were compared. Undesirable peaks in the EMI spectrum due to the high- $Q$  resonances of the small cavity between the dual screens were observed and investigated. Those resonances could be predicted and eliminated through the utilization of a perforated lossy material. The perforation pattern of the lossy material was chosen to avoid impeding airflow between the dual perforated screens. The EMI reduction as a function of spacing between the dual-perforated screens was also studied with FDTD modeling.

## II. MEASUREMENTS AND FDTD MODELING

A shielding enclosure mimicking an actual product enclosure for a file server is shown in Fig. 1. The interior dimensions of the enclosure were 40 cm  $\times$  20 cm  $\times$  50 cm. One-inch copper tape with a conductive adhesive was used as an electromagnetic seal along the seams in the interior. The enclosure was constructed of five pieces of 0.635-cm-thick aluminum and one plate of 0.165-cm-thick aluminum for the face containing the perforated screens. A terminated feed probe at  $x = 43$  cm,  $z = 33$  cm



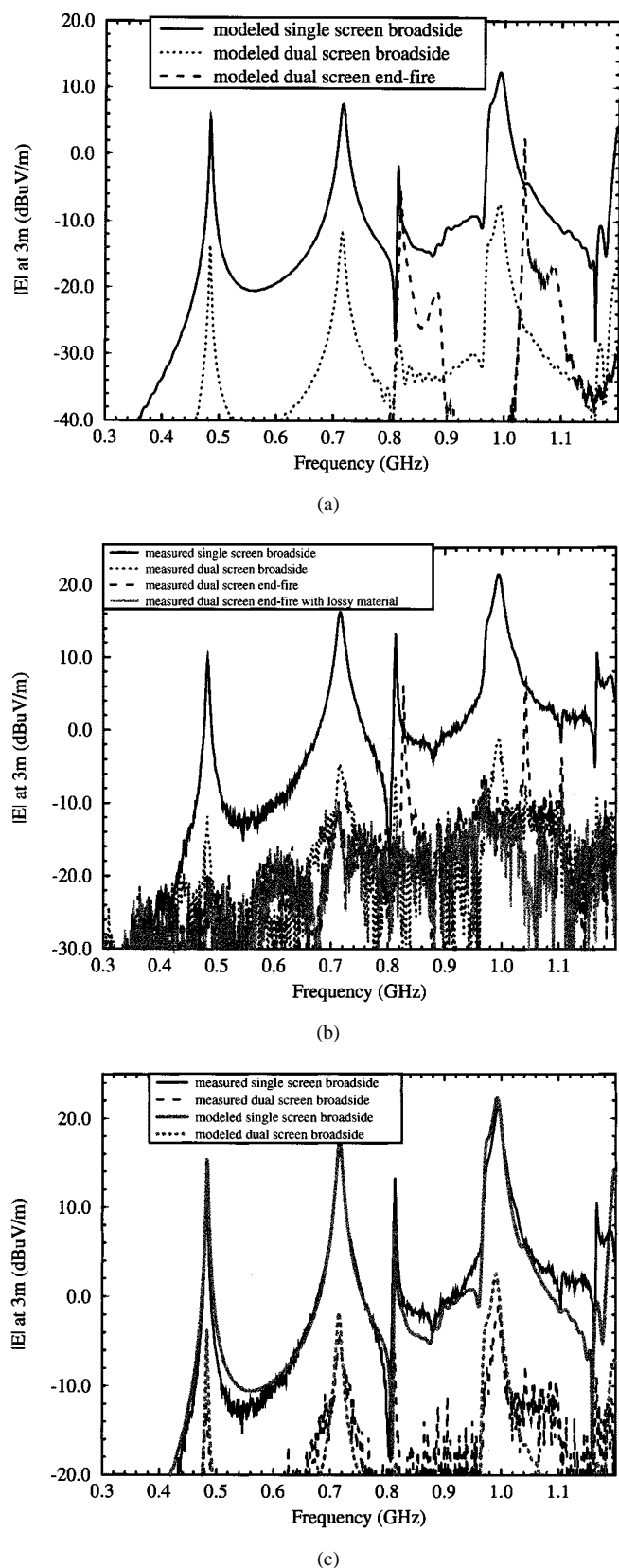


Fig. 3. The radiation from single- and dual-perforated screens from (a) FDTD modeling; (b) measurements; and (c) comparison between the measurements and FDTD modeling on the single and dual screens.

offset by one-half cell from the electric field was used to compensate for the phase difference between the magnetic field and

electric field components. The positions of the virtual surfaces were three cells away from the enclosure surfaces, as shown in Fig. 2. The spacing between the virtual surface and PML was varied from two to six cells and the change of the corresponding far fields was within 1 dB. Thus, the above four-cell spacing between the PML and enclosure surface was adequate for the FDTD modeling.

A considerable number of cells is required in order to accurately model an aperture using FDTD [18]. The FDTD modeling results from the above discretization of  $0.5\text{ cm} \times 0.5\text{ cm} \times 1\text{ cm}$  may result in significant inaccuracy of the absolute EMI level for the apertures investigated. Since the size of the present computational problem including PML's was 500 000 cells, further modeling refinement in the apertures was not possible due to limitations of computational resources. Consequently, the  $1\text{-cm} \times 1\text{-cm}$  apertures were modeled using only four cells. Since only relative radiation is of concern, the conclusions for the comparison between the dual- and single-perforated screens are still reliable. However, in order to compare these numerical modeling results with experimental measurements an additive correction is found to be necessary [18].

The effect on the measurements of the aluminum plate thickness  $t_c$  of the aperture array panel was considered as well, using the empirical estimate of attenuation of  $32(t_c/d)$  (dB) ( $d$  is the diameter of the circle equivalent to the square) [1]. The attenuation factor was 4.7 dB for the single-perforated screen, and 9.4 dB for the dual-perforated screen. These factors were applied to the measurements to facilitate comparison with the zero-thickness case used in the modeling.

FDTD modeling results are shown in Fig. 3(a) for the EMI level for three cases. The first case results from EMI coupling through a single screen configuration with the observation point located 3 m away from the screen in the perpendicular (broadside) direction. In the second case, the single screen configuration was replaced with a dual-screen configuration, while maintaining the same observation point location. In the third case, the observation point is located 3 m from the center of the front screen in the direction parallel (end fire) to the plane of the outer screen.

The high- $Q$  EMI peaks observed at 0.83 and 1.04 GHz in the “end-fire” case correspond to the two lowest calculated resonances [19]—0.84 and 1.06 GHz for the small (1-cm-thick) cavity between the two perforated screens. More significantly, these peaks indicate that the relative EMI advantage of the dual-screen configuration, approximately 20 dB in the broadside direction, is offset by the two peaks observed in the end-fire direction.

Measured results for the same three cases are shown in Fig. 3(b). In addition, a fourth case consisted of placing two pieces of  $5\text{-cm} \times 15\text{-cm}$  lossy material ( $110\ \Omega/\square$ ) in the small cavity between the two perforated screens. In this fourth case, included in Fig. 3(b), the high- $Q$  resonances associated with the small cavity have disappeared, and a general EMI reduction of approximately 20 dB was achieved even though the amount of lossy material was insufficient to completely fill the region between the two screens. The broadside radiation was used in the single-screen configuration to compare the effect of single and dual screens since both measurements and modeling indicated

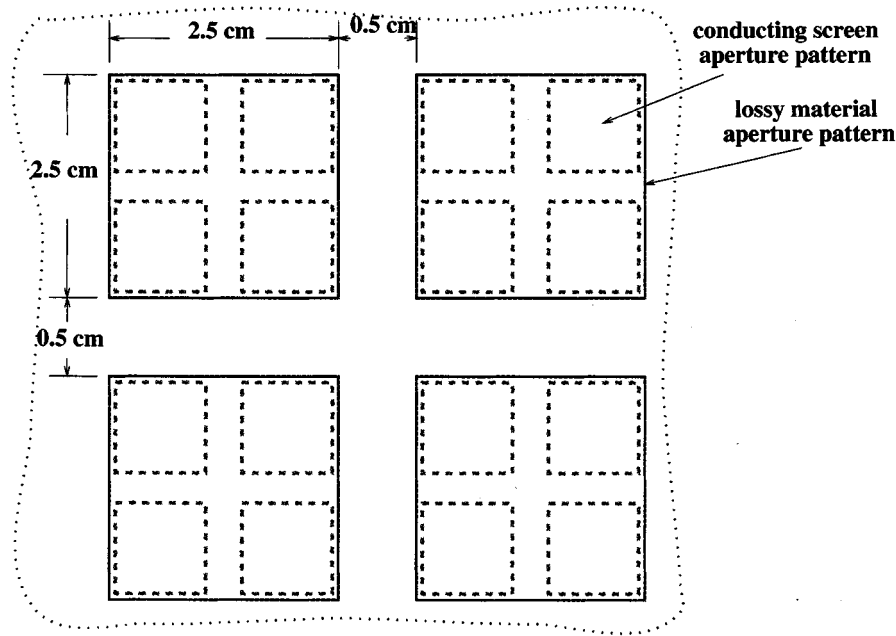


Fig. 4. The design of the lossy material pattern utilized between the dual-perforated screens to eliminate the unwanted high- $Q$  resonances due to the small cavity between them.

that the EMI from a single screen was maximum at the broadside observation point.

Finally, Fig. 3(c) shows a comparison of the measured and modeled single and double-screen EMI levels in the broadside direction. As previously noted, the FDTD modeling results have been raised by 10 dB to compensate for the inadequate number of computational cells in each aperture.

All of the measurements and modeling results cited above were performed for a feed-probe excitation source with the measurements being made in an anechoic chamber. Additional measurements were subsequently made for a test enclosure excited with a patch source. The enclosure was loaded with a populated motherboard from a production system. These measurements were made in a shielded room loaded with absorbing cones along the walls. Only relative measurements were of concern. No attempt was made to compare the measurements and FDTD modeling because of the limitation in the measurement environment. Specifically, the shielded room measurements had a higher noise floor and also had several spurious EMI peaks associated with room resonances. Further, the room was too small for 3-m measurements.

A lossy material pattern was designed to accommodate four apertures in the conducting screens for each aperture in the lossy material, as shown in Fig. 4. A Milliken polyester nonwoven material with a surface conductivity of  $150\ \Omega/\square$  was used. In contrast with the previous lossy material, the Milliken material was sufficiently stiff to allow for the cutting of apertures. As indicated above, only a partial filling of the small cavity was required. It was not necessary to have a one-to-one correspondence of the metal aperture and lossy material aperture. The measured frequency band was from 0.5 to 2.1 GHz. The measured results for the observation point broadside to the aperture array face are shown in Fig.

5. The measured curves were not as smooth as those in the anechoic chamber due to the resonance effects of the shielded room. The EMI peaks due to the small cavity introduced by the dual perforated screens without the lossy material pattern in between resulted at approximately 1.04, 1.52, 1.64, 1.84, 2.02, and 2.08 GHz. These undesirable resonances and EMI peaks were significantly reduced, as shown in Fig. 5, with the addition of the perforated lossy material between the screens. An overall EMI reduction of more than 20 dB resulted.

A similar set of measured results for end-fire observations is shown in Fig. 6. The broadside single-screen measurement is provided as a reference. The dual-screen end-fire results in this figure contain a number of resonant peaks. Many of these peaks line up closely with the calculated resonant frequencies of the small cavity between the screens. A few peaks seem to correspond to room resonances—for example, the peak at around 0.85 GHz was probably associated with a room resonance since it was absent from the anechoic chamber data shown in Fig. 3. Nevertheless, the incorporation of lossy material between the two perforated screens can be seen to significantly reduce many of the dominant EMI peaks in the end-fire direction.

Finally, the effect of spacing between the dual-perforated screens was investigated with FDTD modeling only since the modeling results suggested that the measured results for larger spacing (1 cm) would fall below the noise floor of the measurements. Spacings of 2 and 4 cm were modeled, and the results are shown in Fig. 7. For the spacing of 1, 2, and 4 cm, EMI reductions of 20, 30, and 45 dB, respectively, resulted. Here the observation point was broadside to the array panels in front of the perforated screens. The undesirable resonances were not observable at this point. They can be eliminated with

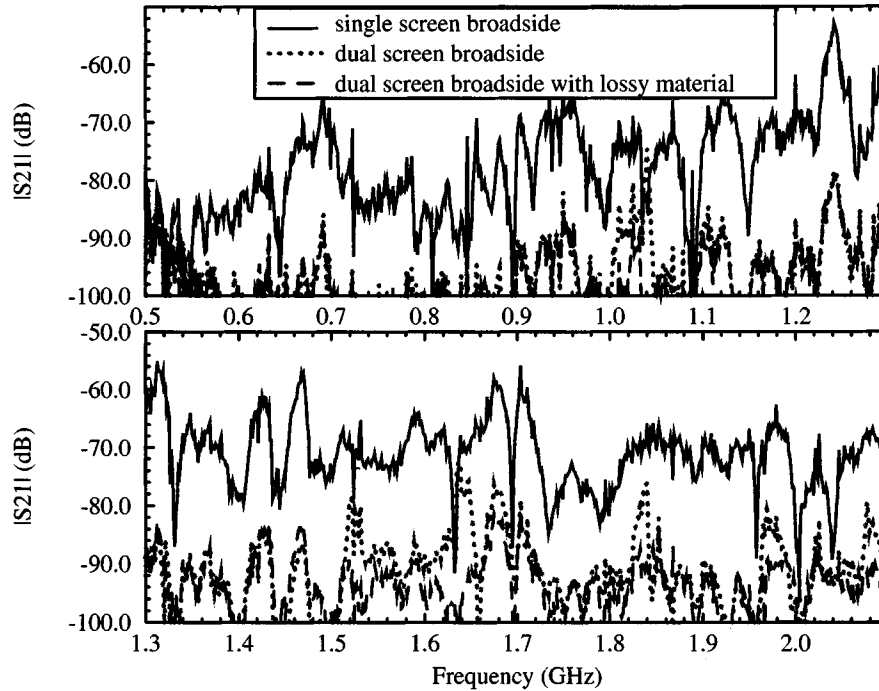


Fig. 5. Measured results in broadside direction for patch source excitation.

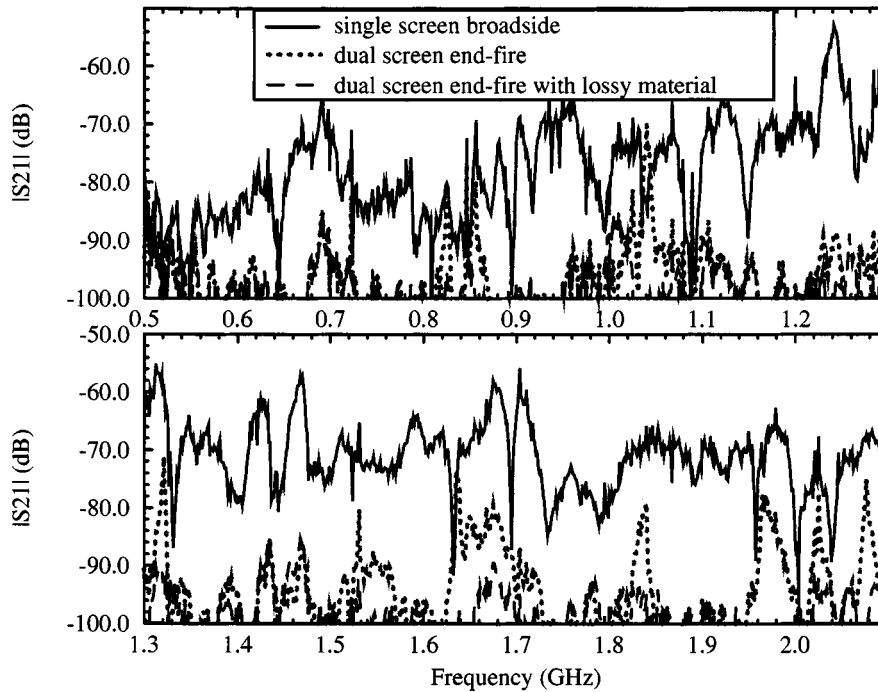


Fig. 6. Measured results in end-fire direction for patch source excitation.

the utilization of a lossy material between the dual-perforated screens. In practice, however, large spacings between the perforated screens may not be acceptable because they could impede the airflow by introducing turbulence between the screens. However, for close spacings such as 1 cm, this thickness can be filled with a perforated lossy material pattern to reduce EMI without disturbing the airflow.

### III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Measurements and numerical modeling were utilized to study EMI reduction utilizing dual-perforated screens for airflow arrays in a shielding enclosure. The results show that a dual-perforated screen with an interstitial lossy material pattern can significantly reduce the EMI from shielding enclosures as compared

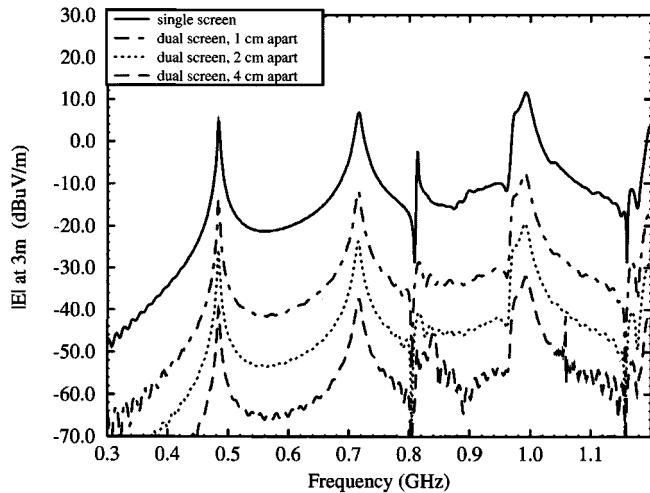


Fig. 7. The FDTD modeled EMI reduction for different spacings between the dual-perforated screens.

to a single perforated screen. This design may offer a cost-effective alternative to waveguide air vents for airflow in shielding enclosures.

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